FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

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Inspiring: Paterson Joseph reads from his book at the Sancho Café opening *Picture Tony Butler*

Café opens with words and music to honour Sancho

THE actor and writer responsible for bringing the extraordinary story of Ignatius Sancho to the wider world officially opened the new Park café in his name.

Paterson Joseph, who has written a book about Sancho, cut the ribbon of the Sancho Café at Vanbrugh Gate. Sancho, born on a slave ship in 1729, orphaned and brought up in Greenwich, became a writer, actor and composer, and the first person of African descent to vote in Britain. At the Café opening, an orchestra played music composed by him and Mr Joseph, after a brilliant speech, read from his book: The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho.

Wesley Kerr, a trustee of The Royal Parks, welcomed everyone to the ceremony on March 23, pointing out that the Cafe was the first of the Greenwich Park Revealed projects to be officially opened. Among those he thanked were the Friends, citing past Chair Liz Coyle. Current Chair Tina Challacombe called it a 'magical event', and Vice Chair Tony Butler said: 'The Café is a significant addition to the Park facilities and will become a community focal point.'

End of the GPR road is plainly in sight

IT has certainly been a long haul, but we can now say, hand on heart, that the Greenwich Park Revealed project is reaching fruition.

The **Grand Ascent** – the recreation of Charles II's vision of giant grass terraces on Observatory Hill – is satisfyingly green. An archaeological dig of the slope found the base of the Victorian restoration and the new steps have been created on top. The lines of trees to lead the eye upwards are now in place on either side of the steps and the work around the General Wolfe statue is well under way.

The project at **One Tree Hill** – partly funded by the Friends - is also almost finished. The bench is being extended and the lettering of the poem around the edge is to be made clearer. At the **Vanbrugh Gate** the Sancho Café is officially open. We look forward to using it for small group meetings as contractor Benugo is keen that it should become a community hub. It is already bustling. The hardstanding around the gate will be updated with a gravel surface. We hope volunteers may be able to help with the vegetables and fruit in the greenhouse and raised beds behind the café – but we understand the Park's apprentices will be working in this area.

The **Learning Centre** should be in use from this month onwards and the Friends are being offered priority to access the facilities on a Monday and Friday, or possibly even Saturday morning. Watch this space for events. The photography group is already planning to use it for meetings and possibly hold an exhibition there.

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So busy: Daniella at the Queen's Orchard open day. *Picture: The Royal Parks*

A Classic case of multi-tasking

HER job title might be a bit of a mouthful but Daniella Briscoe-Peaple is very clear about what she wants to achieve.

Greenwich Park's Partnership and Community Engage-ment Officer loves meeting new people and aims to offer something for every visitor.

Speaking to the Friends' **Clive Corlett**, she said: 'I co-ordinate activities as part of the Greenwich Park Revealed project, and work to support the local community. We aim to respond to what families and local groups would like to have in the Park. I organise and project-manage events, as well as engagement and learning sessions, aiming to have something on offer for everyone.'

Daniella, who comes from Forest Hill, studied Classics at Cambridge, followed by a Masters in Museum Studies. Her first job was teaching Latin and French at Colfe's School in Lee, then she moved into the heritage and museums sector. 'When the job with the Greenwich Park Revealed team came up a year ago, I jumped at the opportunity,' she said.

So, what's a typical day? 'I might start with a meeting with local groups, such as Tramshed in Woolwich, about music and dance events. I might need to talk with the Field Studies Council who run learning sessions. I'll be project-managing events for the final year of the project. I'm also involved with local volunteers, and co-ordinate the Mobility Buggy service.' Her favourite place in the Park? 'That's easy. The view from the Henry Moore sculpture.' And away from work? 'Walking, especially along the Thames path, and painting or doing something creative.' Finally, what happens when the GPR project ends? 'I will be staying on, to provide continuity,' said Daniella. That's a decision the Friends very much welcome.

All you want to know about roses, deer and biodiversity

Continued from Page 1

Dear oh **deer**, it is disappointing to tell you that they will not be back this year as expected. Delays to the works mean they can't be returned until next year. We know a lot of Friends will be sad to hear this but hopefully we won't miss another time slot – it will be good to see them in their new larger surroundings.

Tree planting near **Blackheath Gate** has started. The plan is to make the entrance look more like a Park than a car park. However, some parking spaces will be lost.

Elsewhere… the **Rose Garden** is part way through its three-year redesign. The results are already evident, with more diversity of planting although, never fear, it will still be a rose garden. By the time you read this the diseased beech tree will have gone. All the timber will be used in the Park, either as wood chip or dead-wood. In the **Dell**, a lot of logs are piling up as plans to turn it into a stumpery take effect. Another win for biodiversity in the Park.

Several GPR events are in the pipeline. There will be an Open Day in the Learning Centre on May 25 with activities, and a community display in the Vanbrugh Gate area from August 12 to 26. On August 24 there will be a Greenwich Park Family Festival at the Grand Ascent viewpoint by the General Wolfe Statue.

As more details become clear we'll keep you in-formed in future bulletins and on our website.

Stumped: The diseased old beech tree in the Rose Garden has been felled.

The Romans are the next big dig

THE landscape around the Park's Roman temple will be the subject of Community Archaeologist Andrew Mayfield's next project.

Andrew writes: From May 13 to June 1, volunteers, students and schoolchildren will be exploring the area.

Now just an innocuous mound, investigations across the 20th Century examined the temple and its precinct. At least three buildings have been identified and the last dig featured on Time Team. The site is now a scheduled ancient monument, one of three nationally protected sites in the Park.

Our summer project aims to look at the wider landscape around the Temple complex. We are currently running a series of geophysical surveys and have already identified a number of interesting anomalies! If you look very carefully amongst the trees on the way to Vanbrugh Gate, you may also notice the vestigial traces of an old earthwork. It appears on Victorian maps and we hope to recover dating evidence from it as part of the summer dig. Does it have any connection with what Time Team thought could be part of a Roman road, entering the South-East corner of the Park? We hope to find out this summer! Do come visit the dig and see what we uncover...

FINDS continue to pile up from the parterre spoil heaps, writes Andrew Mayfield. He said: 'What I am particularly enjoying are the range of buttons and badges. One (pictured above left) is what we think is our first Greenwich Hospital button, presumably work by the pensioners. The second (above right) is a badge from 1914, with the Allies' flags brought together...one flag sticks out as by World War Two they were no longer an ally!'

Subscriptions – a huge thank-you

The Friends' committee would like to say how much we appreciate the majority of members having already updated payments for our new subscription. We did ponder long and hard over the increase, and we are delighted that Friends think membership is still worth the money. For those who haven't yet done so, we'd be very pleased if you could bring your payments up to date.

Annual lecture

Andrew Scattergood CBE, the Chief Executive of the Royal Parks, will give the Friends' annual lecture on October 22, at 7.30pm for 8pm in Mycenae House. The talk is entitled: 'The Royal Parks, Building the Future'. Tickets will be available on our website from April 10.

The cost is £10, which includes a glass of wine. Tickets do sell out so book early.

Photography

The group had perfect weather for its March meeting at the brand-new Sancho Cafe.

There were 11 members at the get together and co-leader Ian Welsby said: 'The Park inspires more photographs with every meeting.'

The group hopes to produce a calendar by Christmas, and possibly have an exhibition at the new Learning Centre. The next meeting is on May 4 at 11am, either in the Sancho Café or in the new Learning Centre. Email us at info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk, citing Photography Group.

Poetry please

The Friends' committee is considering setting up a poetry group. If you are a poet, or would like to be one, email info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk, citing Poetry Group in the subject field.

A stroll through time

The Friends are delighted to offer a free 'History Walk' in the Park.

Chris Hawkins, a member of the Friends' History Research Group, will lead the walk, lasting around an hour, on April 25. Meet outside the Observatory gates at 12.50pm. Chris, the author of The Complete Guide to Greenwich Park, will include the Observatory, the Meridian Line, Major General Wolfe, the Grand Ascent and the Queen's House among other landmarks. The walk is for members only on a first come first served basis and is limited to 20 people. Booking opens on the website on April 9. We hope there may be more if this one proves popular.

FRIENDS' AGM

The 31st AGM will take place at the West Greenwich Library on May 7 at 6.30pm for 7.00pm. Copies of the Chair's Report and the Financial Report are enclosed with this Newsletter.

Officers and committee members proposed and seconded for the coming year are:

Chair: Tina Challacombe, 101 Mycenae Road, SE3 7RX

Vice-Chair: Vacant

Committee members:

Richard Jones stands down at this AGM.

Tony Butler stands down as Vice-Chair and seeks re-election to the committee.

Clive Corlett seeks re-election to the committee.

Ruth Carter and Clare Hatcher were co-opted during 2023 and seek election to the committee.

Norman Adams, Katherine Bohanna, Esme Partridge and Susan Taylor continue to serve.

The committee confirms the appointment of Christine Bevan as Secretary, Julie Punter as Treasurer and Rob Toogood as Membership Secretary.

Dates for your Diary

Tree walks: Monica Dunkel will lead two walks for Friends on Saturday, April 13, at 11am and 1pm. Book on the website. Spaces are limited so priority will be given to those who haven't been before. No dogs please.

Bird walks: Julia Holland's walks for Friends continue on May 26; June 23; July 28; August 25; September 29 and October 27. There will be no walk this month. All walks start at 8.30am at the Blackheath Gate. Bring binoculars if you have them.

April 21: Marathon Day.

April 25: History walk, book on the Friends' website.

May 4: Photography Group meeting.

May 25: Learning Centre Open Day. Activities in the new hub.

Every Saturday from June 15: Tai Chi and Tango classes, 10am and 11am.

June 16: Midsummer Jazz in the Observatory Garden.

June 21 and 22: Ignatius! Community Opera, there will be three performances in the Flower Garden.

Every Sunday from June 30: Friends' Bandstand Concerts.

July 13 and 14: Youth Festival weekend, workshops and all-day Skate Jam.

July 27: Archaeology Festival (Grand Ascent viewpoint) 11am – 4pm.

August 12 – 26: GPR 'What Have We Revealed?' Community dis-play.

August 24: Greenwich Park Family Festival (Grand Ascent viewpoint).

Another great programme of concerts this summer

THE Friends are staging an exciting series of concerts in the Park this summer.

Our renowned Midsummer Jazz concert will be held on Sunday June 16. It takes place in the Observatory Garden from 12.30pm to 3pm, and will feature the South London Jazz Orchestra, who return after their stand-out performances in recent years. It is a ticketed event – they are just £5 – and booking details can be found on the flyer included with this Newsletter. Numbers are limited, so book early because last year sold out well in advance. There will be the usual bar and refreshmentstalls. We will again be staging our popular Bandstand concerts, which will run on all Sundays from June 30 until August 25, finishing on Bank Holiday Monday, August 26. See the enclosed flyer for the programme

Back with a bang: The South London Jazz Orchestra *Picture: Olly Ray*

Friends of Greenwich Park

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Friends' Website: www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk
History of Greenwich Park website: www.greenwichparkhistory.org.uk
All enquiries to: info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk

To contact Greenwich Park phone: 0300 061 2380. There are police phone boxes in the Park at St Mary's Gate and Blackheath Gate. In an emergency dial 999; for other calls phone: 020 7161 9740.

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